Pavlowa And Mordkin

By T. G.

THE spirits of the roses of Mussella, and they an elf and a fairy, in turn brought forth another, and they called that one Pavlowa. And Mordkin—he is Bacchus—not Bacchus like, but Bacchus in reality, the exemplar of what the wine god might have been had he been other than a myth.

The one is yet to be found who can describe the poetry of their dancing. Men and women—some writers, some critics and some who are both—all over the civilized world have tried it in vain. The best that any one can do is to give a faint idea of his impressions of these foreign wonders, and if he has had the good fortune to see them in all of their various ballets and divertisements the task is more bewildering than ever.

To begin at the end, for the dancers usually complete their performance with the "Bacchanale" from Glazunow's "The Seasons," the thought flashes through the mind with the sounding of the first mad measure, "Who could dance to that?" But in another moment when Bacchus and this bacchante appear, and in wild abandon, though in perfect concert, every motion and apparently every impulse attuned to the wild strains, it is almost supernal in its inspiration. The wonder of it, too, is, that despite the

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latitude the dance might give to others less artistic, there is nothing in the delineation by these two that is not chaste and beautiful. There are no dancers like them; it is doubtful if there will be.

One of their most remarkable ballets is "Giselle," and as this has not been seen here, perhaps a word or two regarding it might contain something of interest. Those who have seen Pavlowa can best imagine what she can do with it by reading the following excerpt from one of Heine's stories:

"There exists a tradition of nocturnal dancers, known in the Slavic countries as the Wilis. The Wilis are betrothed girls who have died before their marriage. These poor creatures cannot remain tranquil in their tombs. In their hearts, which have stopped beating, in their dead feet, exists a love for dancing which they have not been able to satisfy during their lives. At midnight they rise and gather in troops, and unfortunate is the young man who encounters them. He is forced to dance with them until he falls dead.

"Garbed in their bridal robes, with crowns of orange blossoms on their heads and brilliant rings on their fingers the Wilis dance in the moonlight like elves, their faces although white as snow are beautifully young. They smile with a joy so perfidious, they call you with so much seduction, their manner gives so many soft promises, that these dead bacchantes are irresistable."

It was from this that the ballet was evolved by Adolphe Adam many years ago, and only within comparatively recent years has it been revived. Much of the music is soft and full of sentiment, and the tragic ending calls for dramatic work on the part of Pavlowa in direct contrast to that

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in "The Legend of Azyiade," but she is more than equal to it. In fact, besides being born dancers, the scope of the dramatic expression of the superb Mordkin and the enthusiastic Pavlowa is remarkable, and this must be taken into account in the sum of their success.

With both of them, dancing is not hard work; it is a pleasure. That may be readily seen. There were some other dancers in New York immediately after the departure of these winged wonders in the spring. They had been imported to supplant them in the affections of the city, and while they danced according to Hoyle, with a rule for every step (a reminder of dancing school "one, two, three—one, two, three") the high brows and the masses saw them once and said their last farewell. The fresh, the fairy-like Pavlowa and distinguished Mordkin had made it very hard for any one else to succeed, for their claim, strange to say, was on all classes and the Czar's chief invaders were idolized.

In "The Legend of Azyiade," which might have been an echo from the songs of Hafiz, lovers of the beautiful as pictured in many a Persian setting, took keen delight, though psalm singers who attended unawares were certain that its Orientalism, so vividly portrayed by Pavlowa and Mordkin, was a bale-fire on the ragged edge of perdition. The successful interpretation of the legend necessitates the foreign temperament combined with flying feet and an ability to act, and the scene was one of wondrous fascination. What if there was a little more than the suspicion of a kiss? "Such lips are the predestined food of Kings," and Mordkin was a king and

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little Pavlowa a most bewitching princess.

So perfectly did they reveal the narrative without recourse to verbal expression, that a previous knowledge of the work was unnecessary.

It is to be regretted that these artists could not have been seen here in all of their dances, for instance, Delibes' "Coppelia." It is exquisite.

But we were fortunate in seeing them at all, and doubly so inasmuch as they gave us such a finished performance.

If they will come again—but that is too much to ask, for it is said, that by royal command, Russians in the Imperial Ballet must retire at the age of thirty-two.
